

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5203

INFO AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY DACCA

USLO PEKING

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5260

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, IN, NP, BD

SUBJ: VISIT OF NEPALESE PRIME MINISTER

REF: KATHMANDU 1467 (NOTAL)

1. MEETING WITH THE PRESS ON THE SECOND DAY OF HIS VISIT, APRIL 8, PM TULSI GIRI CONTINUED THE UPBEAT NOTE HE STRUCK IN HIS REMARKS TO THE PRESS IN KATHMANDU ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR INDIA. IN TERMS OF "STATE-LEVEL RELATIONS" HE IS REPORTED BY THE DELHI PRESS AS SAYING THAT NEPAL WAS EQUIDISTANT FROM CHINA AND INDIA, BUT THAT NEPAL CLEARLY HAD MORE CONTACTS WITH INDIA THAN WITH CHINA; THERE WAS "A DEFINITE TILT TOWARDS INDIA." REVIEWING HIS TALKS WITH MRS GANDHI, DR. GIRI QUOTED HER AS SAYING THAT INDIA'S FRIENDSHIP WITH NEPAL SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT NEPAL WOULD ENSURE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ROOM FOR GRIEVANCES ON THIS ACCOUNT. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THE VISITING PM MENTIONED SIKKIM, NEPAL'S STAND ON THE RIGHTS OF LAND-LOCKED COUNTRIES, AND THE IMPRESSION THAT NEPAL WAS NOT READY FOR A FAIR GIVE-AND-TAKE ON MATTERS CONCERNING EACH OTHER'S VITAL INTERESTS AS IRRITANTS IN

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INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONS. HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT A

FAVORABLE TREND IN THE RELATIONSHIP HAD NOW BEEN ESTABLISHED.

2. ON THE ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL, DR. GIRI SAID THAT IT WAS NOT AIMED AT ANY COUNTRY AND THAT NEPAL HAD CONFIDENCE IN THE FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL OF INDIA AND CHINA. HOWEVER, THE FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPMBERIRQTLD, HE SAID, "MAKE US FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE." DR. GIRI SAID THAT MRS GANDHI HAD NOT AGREED TO THE PROPOSAL, AS MORE TIME WAS NEEDED FOR DISCUSSIONS. SHE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL WERE QUITE DIFFERENT THAN BETWEEN NEPAL AND ANY OTHER COUNTRY. DR. GIRI AGREED CITING THE FACT THAT ALMOST ALL NEPALESE ARMY EQUIPMENT WAS FROM INDIA AND THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD AN OPEN BORDER. THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP DID NOT, HE SAID IN ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION, IMPLY A DEPARTURE FROM THE SOVEREIGN EQUALITY OF ALL STATES.

3. DR. GIRI SAID THAT NEPAL WAS SATISFIED WITH THE TRADE AND TRANSIT AGREEMENT BUT WANTED SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION. (THE DELHI PRESS REPORTS THAT A SENIOR NEPALESE TEAM WILL SOON BE VISITING INDIA TO BEGIN TALKS ON THE TREATY).

4. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF INVOLVING BANGLADESH IN PROJECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, DR. GIRI SAID THAT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN NEPAL AND BANGLADESH WERE TO BE STUDIED, BUT THAT HE DID NOT SEE MUCH POINT TO A TRILATERAL APPROACH AS THE TWO MAJOR RIVERS OF BANGLADESH DID NOT PASS THROUGH NEPAL.

5. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT DR. GIRI "VIRTUALLY SNUBBED" A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT WHO ASKED ABOUT ARRESTS IN NEPAL FOR ALLEGED SPYING ON CHINA IN BEHALF OF INDIA. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION ABOUT NEPALESE PASSING ON INFORMATION TO INDIA. THE ARRESTS WERE A "PURELY INTERNAL" MATTER CONCERNING THE PRIVATE SECRETARY OF A MINISTER PASSING ON SOME GOVERNMENT FILES TO SOME FRIENDS.

6. PM GANDHI ALSO SPOKE TO THE PRESS ON APRIL 8. SHE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSURED THAT INDIA WOULD EXTEND ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO NEPAL. SHE INDICATED THAT BILATERAL RELATIONS DOMINATED THE TALKS. THE "TIMES OF INDIA" INFERS FROM THE COMPOSITION OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION THAT ECONOMIC COOPERATION WAS A MAJORE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION.

7. COMMENT: WE AGREE WITH KATHMANDU'S VIEW (REFTEL) THAT THE GOI WILL NOT ALLOW THE GON TO DELINK ECONOMIC AND

POLITICAL ISSUES. HOWEVER, IN A MEETING WITH THE MEA DESK
OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR NEPAL SHORTLY BEFORE THE GIRI
VISIT, WE DETECTED A MORE RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD GON-GOI
RELATIONS. SATISFACTION WAS SPECIFICALLY INDICATED WITH WHAT
THE GOI UNDERSTANDS TO BE NEPAL'S COMMITMENT TO UNDERTAKE
MAJOR HYDRO-ELECTRIC, FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS WITH INDIA.
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